

The Importance of Transition as a Component of Ready Schools



The transition into kindergarten is considered a milestone in the life of a child. How a child begins school can affect his/her future school career.

When children begin kindergarten, they arrive with a wide range of cognitive and social skills, life and cultural experiences, home environments and possible health issues. How children and their families are received into the school system can have a powerful, long lasting effect that can make the difference between future school success and failure.

Ready Schools support and ease the transition into kindergarten. Entry into kindergarten can be a dramatic shift for children in terms of academic demands, social environments, parent involvement, and class size, relative to what they may have experienced before attending kindergarten. Making sure all children are ready to learn when they enter kindergarten, regardless of economic, cultural, developmental, and language background, is an important component of the *Ready to Learn, Ready Schools Initiative*.

Preliminary research in the fall of 2007 conducted by Dr. Patricia Clark of Ball State University's Teacher College found that the *Ready School Initiative* has had an impact on children and families, including:

- A greater sense of community among kindergarten children.
- Easier transition during the first few days of school.
- Increased family involvement in school.

Also, in some communities, the *Ready School Initiative* has contributed to community efforts to improve children's school readiness or academic success.

As a part of her research, Dr. Clark recorded the impressions of several teachers and principals concerning the *Ready School Initiative*:

- "I don't know if it was coincidence or not, but this is the first year, in ten years of teaching, that I have not had any child cry on the first day of school."
- "This year was the easiest (transition to kindergarten) in ten years of teaching. The parents let go more easily."
- "I think it's made a difference for the families. And I think we had people in this school that would never have come in this school."
- "I honestly feel that more parents seem very comfortable in contacting us immediately . . . I think it is a comfort level now. They are feeling we're their school, now."
- "I've had so many more volunteers than I ever had . . . and they don't feel intimidated."

